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ABSTRACT

The academic program development and planning process of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education are examined and contrasted with values and criteria of faculty and institutional leaders. The Indiana Commission is concerned about program structure with regard to student access, student choice, and institutional diversity. It has specific criteria that it uses when reviewing new program requests, including: quality and efficiency, appropriateness, availability of similar programs, personal and social utility, student demand, attention to student access and the enrollment of underrepresented groups, flexibility of program design, market demand, interinstitutional and interdepartmental cooperation, degree of cooperation with employers, and the use of telecommunications and faculty to offer courses at noncampus sites. In considering quality, the state examines purposes or goals, the congruence between program goals and institutional planning processes of goals, the use of resources, the context in which the activities of the program take place, and the degree to which the program attains its goals. Perspectives of individual faculty members often center on the academic standards that would be met by the proposed program. At the departmental level, the quantity of resources allocated is often a major consideration for considering new degree programs. Institutional leaders, trustees, or board members vary in their approach to academic planning. In many cases, however, their attitudes seem to be to offer a new program if it is financially feasible and the faculty favor the program. (SW)

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FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRAM PLANNING: THE FACULTY, THE DEPARTMENT, THE INSTITUTION AND THE STATE

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FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRAM PLANNING: THE FACULTY, THE DEPARTMENT, THE INSTITUTION AND THE STATE

Robert A. Scott

Academic program planning seems to be on nearly everyone's agenda. New administrative posts are being created, new professional associations are being formed, and new books, monographs, and newsletters are being advertised. It would seem that academic planning has come of age and is now a topic of concern to many educators. But what is it? One definition is that academic planning is the thoughtful and imaginative preparation of data for decision making, and the outline of steps to be taken to meet carefully defined objectives. This assumes of course that objectives are defined, known, and shared by institutional members.

In planning, one must ask, "which of our present activities should we maintain? At what level of resource commitment should they be maintained? Which activities should be scaled down or abandoned? Which activities should be supported with additional resources? What activities should be added, and why?"

The questions asked in preparation for planning are really questions about existence. What is our reason for being? What should be our reason for being? What resources do we require in order to be?

In a recent Jossey Bass source book (New Directions for Institutional Research, Number 8, 1980, p. 4), Richard B. Heydinger outlines thirteen styles of planning, thirteen different tools and processes, which include:

knowledge development	entrepreneurial
administrative initiative	curriculum committee
governing-coordinating board	formal democratic
program focused	needs assessment
program data	program review
program development fund	incremental budgeting
economic incentives	

These thirteen tools and processes are neither mutually exclusive nor useful in every setting. Combinations of processes may be more appropriate in some cases. The point is that academic planning has a fairly well-developed conceptual base.

Of special interest to me are the different perspectives -- the varied values and criteria -- used in planning by the major parties at interest: individual faculty members, academic departments, institutional leaders, and, at public campuses, the state. Before exploring these differences of views and values, I should say a few words of introduction about the state agency in Indiana.

The Commission for Higher Education was created in 1971 to advise the executive and legislative branches of state government about support for post-high school education, a major governmental activity. Nearly 25% of general fund expenditures in Indiana are spent on postsecondary education. The Commission's principle responsibilities include (a) making recommendations about institutional operating and capital budgets, Special State Appropriations, and funds for the State Student

Assistance Commission; (b) review and approval authority for any new academic programs, centers, institutes, or campuses; (c) authority to define the missions of public postsecondary institutions; and (d) planning for the post-high school education and training needs of the citizens of the state.

State agencies for higher education are of several patterns of authority. Some are consolidated governing boards for all public institutions, or for only senior institutions in states which have separate agencies governing community colleges. Others are coordinating boards with program approval authority or with program review and recommendation authority only. There are a variety of patterns of responsibility for budget development and recommendations.

Post-high school education in Indiana is a major enterprise. For 1979-81, public funds in the sum of nearly nine hundred million dollars were dedicated to higher education. This includes six corporate public institutions with twenty-eight campuses and centers which enroll nearly one hundred and ninety thousand students, thirty-one independent colleges which enroll more than fifty thousand students, six independent religious colleges which enroll nearly three thousand students, and almost one hundred private career schools which enroll sixteen thousand students.

In this essay, I wish to emphasize the academic program development and planning processes of the Commission for Higher Education and contrast them with what I perceive to be the values and criteria of

faculty and institutional leaders. My hope is that by talking about the differences we can develop mutual understanding and improve the process of academic planning and program development.

To help set the stage, I will first comment on the process of program development in public institutions as seen from the point of view of a state officer responsible for the review of such activities. The process of program development often, although not always, seems to follow a pattern. First, service courses are introduced to provide required electives for students in an existing program. Second, students who have taken the required introductory elective course then wish to take an intermediate course in the field, and so an additional faculty member is hired to offer it. Third, faculty members wish to offer courses in their areas of expertise and students who have taken introductory and intermediate level courses wish to take advanced electives. Fourth, a "critical mass" of students, courses, and faculty are recognized, which may be of greater size than existing programs, and faculty associated with this collection of courses propose to offer a major and to create a department.

This has been called the "bottom-up" approach to program development. An alternative approach is for a research center or doctoral program to be established first and for there to be a form of "top-down" development which finally results in baccalaureate and sub-baccalaureate programs. One can also imagine the establishment of an entire range of degree levels all at once, but this is uncommon.

Referring again to the "bottom-up" approach, one must ask: how and when are the particular design features of a major added? What examples of existing programs are instructive for developing the design? How does a collection of courses created for other purposes become an integrated, coherent whole? These are only a few of the questions which arrest the attention of the state academic offices.

As previously stated, the parties at interest in program planning are individual faculty members, department chairpersons, institutional leaders, and, for public institutions, the state. How do the values and perspectives of these parties differ? What are the consequences of these differences?

Individual faculty are the basic organizational units of an institution. There are nearly six thousand full-time faculty at Indiana's public institutions of higher education (and about twenty-one hundred at the independent colleges in the state). In my experience, faculty generally respond to the normative power of the reward structure of a campus--research and publication at a university--which reinforces faculty orientation toward a discipline, the institution, or students. (It is true, I think, that the effects of different incentives vary by a faculty member's age, school, and rank.) This phenomenon in turn is associated with what I consider to be a psychology or philosophy of closure: the need for a degree program to be the capstone of a set of activities. In shaping a new degree program, the faculty member often seems to think primarily of the expectations of other faculty at his or her campus, or elsewhere, or of practicing professionals who set

licensure or certification standards. The major concern is whether the program is academically sound according to the standards of other faculty or of professionals in the field.

If faculty are the basic organizational units of an institution, departments are the basic building blocks. The department is the source of prestige for an institution and the organizational unit employed for the distribution of resources. There are probably about fifteen hundred departments at Indiana's public institutions, if one assumes that there is an average of three academic degree programs per department at Indiana's fifteen public university campuses.

The department seems to value growth and influence, and to seek external acclaim to be used as currency for internal claims. Its notion of excellence is often based on the quantity of resources allocated. The department is, of course, a collectivity of individual faculty and the psychology of closure is still evident. Additional degree programs are desired in part, it seems, just because other institutions have them. Degree programs are in some way milestones for a department. Departments, too, look for approval by colleagues.

Faculty curriculum committees represent a level between the department and the full time administration. They, too, have an active role in planning academic programs, but I will not comment further on them in this essay.

The institutional leader represents the board of trustees. There are six autonomous corporate boards of trustees in Indiana and they seem to vary greatly in their involvement in academic development. The same is true at the campus level. Institutional leaders vary in their approach to academic planning. In many cases, though, their attitudes seem to be:

-If no new money is needed to start a program, good!
-We need to round out our offerings by having a degree program in X.
-We won't be a real university without this program.
-The faculty is my client--I must satisfy them.

These views are familiar to most of us in academe. By contrast, the interests, values, and criteria of state agencies are not. In most cases, a state's interest is represented by a board of regents, by a governing board, or by a coordinating commission. In Indiana, the state's interests in higher education are represented by the Commission for Higher Education.

The Commission for Higher Education in Indiana has no direct authority over program development at independent colleges or private career schools, yet it must take these institutions into account when reviewing program requests from public institutions. Therefore, one of the Commission's roles is to stimulate discussions between and among academic leaders at various types of institutions.

In order to help me understand the Commission's role, I developed a set of general principles for state policy toward higher education several months after I assumed my present duties. These are not official statements, but perhaps they will help you as they have helped me understand how Indiana's agency operates.

General Principles for State Policy Toward Higher Education

1) The General Assembly and the Governor are the Commission's clients.

2) The state purchases services; it does not subsidize resources.

3) Standards of high quality must be respected.

4) Educational structures should reflect educational missions, and be responsive, flexible, and cooperative in adapting to changing needs.

5) Education and training programs and services should be accessible (in terms of requirements, scheduling, location, price, etc.) to those who are eligibile.

6) Instruction, certification, and licensure should be recognized as separate processes.

7) New technologies provide opportunities to reduce fixed costs, increase productivity, improve the quality and variety of offerings, and expand access to instruction and information.

Please note that the focus in these principles is not on degrees but on service to clients defined as the state's citizens' and those who represent them. There is no assumption that instruction and certification and licensure be linked. There is a respect for alternative methods which can enhance quality, increase flexibility and access, and limit long term costs.

Therefore, the state agency, when reviewing a program request, must ask questions such as: Why is this program the next logical step in the life of an institution? What would the state lose by not having this program? How does this degree program relate to a need for instruction or research or service in an area of knowledge? What will be the return on this investment of scarce state resources? In what way is this a distinctive offering, not necessarily a unique program, but a special opportunity for the citizens of this state?

No program is free, even if no new funds are requested. High quality services cost money and inevitably must take resources from other activities. What support in terms of funds for travel to observe other programs and in relief from other duties has been committed to those designing the new program? Are adequate support services available to students?

What is the design of the program and how will functions and structures complement each other in a manner that accomplishes basic objectives gracefully and effectively. Good design allows form or structure to complement purpose; form follows function in academic programs just as it does in scientific experiments, products, and buildings.

The state expects institutions to have a planning process for programs just as they do for capital expenditures. The state expects institutional leaders to balance the needs and demands of the building blocks on campus: to drop or to cancel or to diminish programs as well as to

propose new ones. The state looks to the institutions for leadership in the development of instructional, research, and technical assistance activities.

In Indiana, the Commission is concerned about program structure with regard to student access, student choice, and institutional diversity. It has specific criteria which it uses when reviewing new degree program requests, including:

1) Quality and efficiency: The ability of an institution to offer a program of high quality in an efficient manner. I will say more about quality in a later section.

2) Appropriateness: The proposed program is appropriate in terms of institutional mission.

3) Availability of similar programs: The proposed program is not an unwarranted duplication of existing programs in the state or region. One important consideration is whether the persons to be served by the proposed program could reasonably be served by an existing program. The Commission staff has an inventory of programs available in the state to consult. It is interesting to note that the creation by a neighboring institution of a program similar to one already in existence is often seen as an unwarranted duplication and an unwise use of state resources. The institution proposing the new program, however, asserts that it is adding to student choice and that competition is healthy. This is a set of conflicting values which the state commission must consider.

4) Personal and social utility: The proposed program is designed to provide participants with instruction in subjects that have personal value or social utility.

5) Student demand: There are indications that the proposed program will attract sufficient enrollment to justify the support required to start and continue it.

6) Attention to student access and the enrollment of underrepresented groups.

7) Flexibility of program design to enhance student development and achievement.

8) Market demand: There is employment demand for persons with the training proposed. This is an especially important

consideration for programs designed to offer occupational or professional training. An Advisory Council of local representatives from commerce, industry, and service agencies should be created to advise the faculty on the design of new programs and to help faculty in finding internships and financial aid for students. Such councils may also donate services and equipment, and provide sabbatical opportunities for faculty.

9) Interinstitutional and interdepartmental cooperation. The proposed program will to the greatest extent possible develop cooperative relationships, including the sharing of resources, with related programs at other institutions or in other departments.

10) Degree of cooperation with employers.

11) Use of telecommunications and circuit-riding faculty to offer courses at non-campus sites.

In considering quality, the state does not limit its concern to input measures but also examines purposes or goals; the congruence between program goals and institutional goals, which inevitably must be congruent with societal or patron goals and values; the use of resources; the context in which the activities of the program take place, and the degree to which the program attains its goals or peak performance.

In summary, then, the perspectives, values, criteria, and clients of these four groups--the individual faculty member, the department, the institutional leader, and the state agency--tend to differ, yet they meet together in public debate about program and budget requests. There are differences in both values and points of view about client groups, incentives, who takes initiative, student persistence and cognitive development, and measures of quality and success.

Differences in perspective are to be expected, and are usually healthy, but they must be understood. The better we understand such differences of view about program development, the more constructive will be both academic program development and public policy debate.